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RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1628
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RUEHDS/AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA 1632
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 0898
RUEHDK/AMEMBASSY DAKAR 1260
RUEHKM/AMEMBASSY KAMPALA 1688
RUEHNR/AMEMBASSY NAIROBI 4100
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1457
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 2118
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 0757
RHEHAAA/NSC WASHDC
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 1849
RHMFISS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC
RUEHC/DEPT OF LABOR WASHDC
RUEATRS/DEPT OF TREASURY WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC//DHO-7//
RUCPDOG/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK//DOOC/ECMO/CC/DAO/DOB/DOI//
RUEPGBA/CDR USEUCOM INTEL VAIHINGEN GE//ECJ23-CH/ECJ5M//

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000532

SIPDIS

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

AF/S FOR S. HILL
NSC FOR SENIOR AFRICA DIRECTOR B. PITTMAN
STATE PASS TO USAID FOR L.DOBINS AND E.LOKEN
TREASURY FOR J. RALYEA AND T.RAND
COMMERCE FOR BECKY ERKUL
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU
ADDIS ABABA FOR ACSS
EB/EX GALE GRAY, DENNIS WINSTEAD

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [KWMN](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#)
SUBJECT: GEARING UP TO IMPLEMENT NEW DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ACT

Summary

11. (SBU) After years of debate and controversy, Parliament in February passed the Domestic Violence Act which criminalizes domestic violence and protects victims of domestic abuse. While President Mugabe has yet to set the date for the Act to become law, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and local women's groups have begun to map out its implementation. The Act is viewed as a milestone by women's organizations. Nevertheless, they acknowledge that Zimbabwe still has a long way to go toward achieving gender equality.
End Summary.

Domestic Violence Act Finally Reality

12. (U) In 2005, the Ministry of Women's Affairs formed a Legal Experts Committee to draft a Domestic Violence Act to help prevent domestic violence and protect victims of domestic abuse. Last year the draft bill was presented to the Cabinet's all-male Committee on Legislation. Zimbabwe Women's Lawyers Association (ZWLA) Director Emilia Muchawa described to pol assistant the challenge of presenting the bill to the Committee and how it had impressed upon her the need to have female lawyers in the GOZ Cabinet and in the

lower house in Parliament. She said one Minister on the Committee, for example, had warned his colleagues that "if we are not careful, all men will be arrested." Nonetheless, the Cabinet approved the bill and sent it to Parliament, where it met resistance, in particular, from traditional Chiefs and some opposition MPs. MDC MP Timothy Mubhawu made headlines when he decried the Act as "against God's will." Women's groups responded in protest and the bill eventually passed Parliament and was signed by President Mugabe. He has not yet set a date for the Act to become law.

Women's Ministry, Gender Groups Eager To Kick Off

13. (SBU) Having lobbied hard for passage of the Act, the Ministry of Women's Affairs and several gender-rights NGOs have continued close consultations to ensure the Act is fully implemented. They recognize that previous social legislation, such as the Sexual Offences Act, failed to affect behavior due to inadequate planning and training) an outcome they are determined to prevent in this instance. Most recently, the gender-based groups gathered in May at a coordination meeting organized by the Ministry and the United Nations Fund for Population Activities (UNFPA). The meeting included representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Attorney General's Office, the Chief's Council, the police, victim-friendly courts, and civil society. Muchawa told pol assistant that the Ministry of Justice was finalizing enabling regulations and that the Ministry of Women's Affairs recognized the need to task different gender groups with implementing various parts of the legislation. For instance, ZWLA was tasked to train magistrates, clerks of court,

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Chiefs, and the police to understand domestic violence better. Other NGOs had conducted studies to determine the extent of the problem in Zimbabwe.

14. (SBU) Minister of Women's Affairs Oppah Muchinguri has assumed the driver's seat in implementation of the Act and, so far, is working well with civil society. Zimbabwe Women's Resource Centre Director Dorothy Adebajo told us that Muchinguri recognized that the process would not work without civil society's engagement. The women,s groups, however, still faced challenges, including inadequate resources. The Ministry of Women's Affairs currently receives a paltry 0.5 percent of the national budget despite calls to allocate more resources to gender and equality issues. Through her own initiative, Muchinguri has set up "gender units" in every Ministry and women's groups have welcomed her role in advancing women's rights.

Comment

15. (SBU) The passage and implementation of the Domestic Violence Act is a long overdue and important step for efforts to curb domestic violence. Nonetheless, domestic abuse is deeply rooted in Zimbabwe. Its eradication will ultimately require a cultural shift and the benefit of economic recovery. The Act's passage shows that Zimbabwe's women's movement continues to gain political clout, especially those segments that have aligned themselves with Muchinguri. She has emerged as a key player and, some say, vice-presidential contender within ZANU-PF. Her close connection with the ruling party, however, has alienated some gender groups that do not want to become tainted by the Mugabe regime. Meanwhile, the MDC continues to be caught flat footed) or even wrong-footed) when it comes to gender issues, partially explaining why ZANU-PF has traditionally been assured the women's vote.

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